

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended): A re-sealable strip device for drying and storage of micro-organisms comprising:

- a strip comprising a primary water absorbent preparation containing at least one water absorbent substance and at least one protective substance; and
- a housing for said strip having one or more re-sealable access windows over said water absorbent preparation housing which when sealed provides provide a closed, water-impermeable system around the strip,
- wherein said housing contains only one strip.

2. (Previously Amended): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 1, wherein said primary water absorbent preparation incorporates one or more substances that have both protective and water absorbent properties.

3. (Previously Amended): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 1, wherein said primary water absorbent preparation further comprises one or several absorbent bibulous foam or fiber-based pads or other matrices.

4. (Previously Amended): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 1, wherein said primary water absorbent preparation is in contact with or in proximity to a secondary water absorbent preparation.

5. (Previously Amended): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 4, wherein said secondary water absorbent preparation has the format of one or several absorbent beads, tablets, plugs, bibulous foam or fiber-based pads enclosed within the strip device.

6. (Previously Amended): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 1, wherein said re-sealable housing is a foil pouch.

7. (Currently Amended): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 1, wherein ~~said re-sealable housing comprises over each~~ one or more access windows ~~over each of which there~~ is a water impermeable cover that can be opened and re-sealed, whereby, once re-sealed, the device regains its water impermeable properties.

8. (Previously Amended): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 1, wherein said re-sealable housing has a label.

9. (Previously Amended): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 1, wherein said re-sealable housing has a secondary tear or peel seal which can be opened in order to aseptically remove the strip.

10. (Withdrawn): A process for the drying and storage of viable micro-organisms, said process comprising:

- a) providing a re-sealable strip device according to claim 1;
- b) opening a re-sealable access window cover in the housing of the strip device to gain access to the strip;
- c) adding a micro-organism preparation to be dried through said window on to the water absorbent preparation located on the strip;
- d) sealing the strip device by closing the re-sealable window cover on said housing; and
- e) storing the strip device,

whereby the amount of the micro-organism preparation and the amount of the water absorbent preparation within the device are chosen such that, after the addition of the micro-organism preparation, the water absorbent preparation is able to absorb the water contained in the micro-organism preparation and render the micro-organisms substantially dry.

11. (Withdrawn): A process according to claim 10, wherein said process further comprises, after e), opening the strip device and removing the strip from the housing; and

- f) rehydrating the micro-organisms.

12. (Withdrawn): A process according to claim 10, wherein in e), the strip device

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is stored at a temperature between 0°C and 30°C.

13. (Previously Amended): A kit for drying and storage of micro-organisms at least comprising a re-sealable strip device according to claim 1; and at least one container of buffer solution or a solution incorporating protective substances for optimizing the preservation procedure.

14. (Previously presented): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 4, wherein said secondary water absorbent preparation comprises a desiccating chemical which is silica gel or a molecular sieve material.

15. (Previously presented): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 1, wherein said strip comprises a solid support on to which is attached said water absorbent preparation.

16. (Previously presented): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 15, wherein said solid support is a non-water absorbent material, and said water absorbent preparation is bonded to said solid support by adhesive.

17. (Previously presented): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 3, wherein said strip comprises a solid support on to which one or several of said absorbent bibulous foam or fibre-based pads or matrices which incorporate one or more water absorbent substances and one or more protective substances.

18. (Previously presented): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 1, wherein said at least one protective substance is a carbohydrate, polymer, amino acid, peptide or protein.

19. (Previously presented): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 1, wherein said at least one water absorbent substance is starch, dextrin, dextran, cellulose, protein, polypeptide, agar, agarose, polyacrilamide, sephadex, sepharose, or a mixture thereof.

20. (Previously presented): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 1, wherein said one or more substances having both protective and water absorbent properties is trehalose or sucrose.

21. (Previously presented): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 1, wherein said primary water absorbent preparation comprises trehalose and/or sucrose and one or more biologically compatible buffer components.

22. (Previously presented): A re-sealable strip device according to claim 4, wherein said secondary water absorbent preparation comprises at least one water absorbent substance, but does not comprise at least one protective substance.